

## D20-2 lect notes 1

Godard and others--the impact of film practice on film theory  
Godard as Brechtian; as postmodernist

Many use the model of scientific investigation  
--that theory proceeds practice

medicine, engineering, etc.

(this of course is flattering to theorists)

However, in the human sciences it is different

practice, in this case the art of film as developed by filmmakers,  
almost always precedes film theory

Film theory is a relentless attempt to catch up to film practice

exception--the extreme distortion produced in academic film studies in the  
70s-80s by a specific group who want to monopolize the discussion for reasons of  
professional self promotion (example of CPAs and taxes) who attempt to redefine  
film theory as a certain kind of discourse

[refer to institutional analysis in 1st quarter]

Just as Italian neo-realism was the "right" movement for Bazinian theory [the  
current canon], the film movements of the 60s were the basis for the film theories  
of the post 68 period.

although not uniformly--the changing fortunes of Bergman  
the important examples of Antonioni, Rossellini

Godard becomes the most crystalized version of 60s concerns in film

his extreme self consciousness of film  
of himself and his own ideas and personality (public persona as self  
promo)

Godard as Swiss intellectual

the romanticism of Rousseau  
the rationalism of Voltaire

The key films

Breathless

Vivre Sa Vie

Pierrot Le Fou

Alphaville

Masculin-Feminine (in our collection)

Weekend as Godard's critique of modern civilization

1966

the idea of mixing drastically different styles, forms  
assaulting conventional expectations (esp. bourgeois good taste)  
"absurdist"

political, in a certain way  
moralistic (always in Godard)

The concept of classical Hollywood cinema  
read Bordwell essay from this perspective

The idea of a Brechtian cinema, influence of BB  
[see Wollen essay on *Wind from the East* as counter-cinema]  
[NB. The JC definition of counter-cinema is much broader than the  
dominant notion in film theory]

The problem of a political reading of Brecht vs. a strictly formalist reading  
example of Brian Henderson essay (in M&M 1, H's Critique)  
"Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style"  
claims that the camera movements in themselves are ideological  
(or in this case anti-bourgeois ideology)  
Robin Wood's reply: but I end up enjoying it, appreciating it as  
its own aesthetic choice/device  
test this for yourself when we see the film  
[note too, that this argument is essentially the same as (ie  
working in the same set of presuppositions as) Bazin's argument  
that style creates meaning, and Henderson's argument is not all  
that much different than Bazin's in explicating the sequence  
shot in *Le crime de M. Lange*.

An apparent puzzle. The resolution: The concept of "Brechtian" must be  
understood as fundamentally political, and not therefore reducible to form alone.  
The notion of a strictly formal attack on bourgeois ideology is the dream of petty  
bourgeois intellectuals who would like a painless revolution that only takes place  
in people's heads, that could be accomplished in form alone. In actual point of  
fact, Brechtian has to be understood with the following minimal concerns:

- a. a radical content
- b. an innovative form that resists "easy" or "comfortable" assimilation  
[B's attack on "culinary" or "Aristotelean" theatre]
- c. an historical moment, a political context
- d. and an audience, ready, willing, and able to take action  
BB--good theatre divides its audience

Godard as postmodernist  
postmodernism

being after modernism

1. vs. eclecticism, for the clean, machine age, Bauhaus,  
form follows function
2. novelty and originality, always avant garde
3. reject decoration, ornament; for geometric, clear
4. vs. national, regional, vernacular, for the international  
and cosmopolitan

5. art of the future--would affect society (but fundamentally elitist--intellectuals will decide)  
example: Le Corbusier housing blocks

postmod

characteristics:

1. plurality of styles, hybrid, eclecticism
2. recycling of styles, "retro style"; quotations, collage, parody, pastiche
3. ornament and decoration
4. mix high and low culture, assumes various responses from general public and those "in the know" [a kind of irony] but makes work accessible to both
5. concern with meaning, statement (art can communicate, this should be a concern of the artist)
6. "intertextuality" constant reference to the world of art, of media itself, as an artificial but real part of existence. Art and discourse structure the way we understand the world of "the Real". Out there is In here.